

The Confessions of a German Deserter

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Written by a Prussian Officer Who Participated in the Ravaging and Pillaging of Belgium

FRENCH SOLDIERS ARE SLAUGHTERED WHEN, SURROUNDED, THEY THROW DOWN THEIR ARMS

Synopsis.—The author of these confessions, an officer in the pioneers' corps of the German army, a branch of the service corresponding to the engineers' corps of the United States army, is sent into Belgium with the first German forces invading that country. Ignorant of their destination or of the reasons for their actions, the German soldiers cross the border and attack the Belgian soldiers defending their frontier. Civilians—men, women and children—are driven from their burning homes as the Zeppelins and giant guns of the Germans raze the strongest fortifications. The Germans sweep on across Belgium, slaying and burning under orders of their officers to show no mercy. Some German soldiers who tried to aid helpless refugees were rebuked by their officers, one of whom declared that such a thing as pity was insanity. The German pioneers throw pontoon bridges across the Meuse in the face of a murderous fire from the French.

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

The dead bodies were seized by two men, one at the head and the other at the feet, and thrown into the ditch. Corpses were handled exactly as if they were to be used in building a bridge. Legs and arms were tossed likewise into the ditch. Dead horses and damaged batteries had to be removed. We were not strong enough to remove dead horses. We managed to capture a horse which was running wild and hitched him to the carcasses. Corpses hanging in the trees were left there. No one cared anything about them.

Canteens and knapsacks of the dead were searched for food and drink and whatever we found was eaten with the greatest relish.

French soldiers who had died of sunstroke covered the road. Others crawled to right and left of the road and waited there for relief or death. We did not dare to help them. The order was to advance and we had to march on and on. The captain told us we had to pursue the fleeing enemy with all our strength and much discontent was manifest on receipt of this order.

After being on our feet day and night, slaying like barbarians, taking no time to eat or rest, we continued to receive commands to maintain the pursuit with all haste. The captain understood how we felt and tried to pacify us by friendly conversation.

CHAPTER V.

Not far from Sommepey, the French rear guard stopped again. Four batteries of our artillery were brought into position and our company, along with machine guns, were ordered to protect the artillery. The artillery officers did not think this sufficient protection because the airplanes had discovered the presence of strong French cavalry detachments and a cavalry attack was suspected. However, a stronger guard could not be provided and there was nothing to be done but take our position and make the best of the situation. We dug ourselves in to the right and left of the batteries, in a field of small pine trees. The machine guns were set up and supplied with ammunition. We were then given instructions as to what to do in the event of a cavalry attack. An old major of infantry, with white hair, took command. Our unit was placed with the infantry, but our "brave" officers disappeared suddenly. To them the defense of the fatherland was the business of a private. Since we had been assigned to assist infantry, our officers considered themselves superfluous and took French leave.

Our instructions were as follows: In the event of a cavalry attack, everything must be quiet. The gun must be pointed but hidden. The machine gun must not be fired until the major in command gives the order. Then there must be a lively, quick fire. Our batteries fired violently at a biplane flying high over them which gave signals with star shells which were read only by the observer.

This state of affairs affects only "pioneer" officers who, when their units are attached to infantry or chasseur divisions, scarcely ever take part in a battle. This was the case with our officers during my whole war career. They remained far away from the gunfire in comfortable security. This is also the case with many infantry captains and almost all higher officers. Majors, colonels, etc., never take part in a storming attack. I was told, and several times I observed this myself.

But the expected attack did not come, the enemy's infantry was not to be seen. We prepared to resume our march and were all ready to move when the order came to bivouac. The

spot where we were to rest was as usual fixed by the staff so that they knew where to find us at any time. Hardly had we reached the place when our field kitchen, which we supposed had been lost, appeared as if it had come out of the ground. Those in charge of the field kitchen had received no knowledge of our losses of the last few days and had cooked for the old number. They were greatly surprised on seeing instead of a brave company of strong "pioneers," a lot of ragged, exhausted, crushed human shadows. We were given soup, bread, meat, apples and every one received a cigarette, which was more welcome to most of us than food and drink.

The next morning we slept until six o'clock and even though we were lying on the bare ground it was very hard to wake us. Breakfast was excellent. It consisted of mutton which had been requisitioned, vegetables, bread, coffee, a goblet of wine, and ham. Our captain told us to eat all we could as we had a hard day's march before us.

We resumed our march at seven o'clock. Everybody was in high spirits and in the course of our conversations it became apparent that we had lost track of the time entirely. Nobody knew whether it was Monday or Wednesday or whether it was the fifth or tenth of the month. This condition became more and more general. Soldiers never know the day of the week; one is just like another, Saturday, Sunday or Thursday.

We stopped to rest at noon on a large farm but were obliged to wait in the rain for the field kitchens. Meanwhile we helped ourselves. We shot one of the cows grazing in the meadow, cut open the hide without bothering to drain the blood from the carcass. Then everybody cut off a piece of meat, still warm, which was fried in a pot cover or eaten raw with a little salt by a great many of the soldiers. This killing of cattle was repeated almost daily by the soldiers acting without orders from their superiors. As a consequence they all got stomach trouble from eating meat which was too fresh without bread or vegetables. In spite of this the practice was continued. If a soldier became hungry during a pause in the marching and found a pig, cow or lamb, he shot it, cut out a piece for his own use, and let the rest spoil.

Under a burning midday sun we marched on amid clouds of dust, along a road used by munitions columns and other units, which never gave the dust an opportunity to settle. In all the fields which we passed, fugitives had set up their camps, where they lived like poor homeless gypsies. Many came up to us and begged for scraps of bread.

We marched without resting till late in the evening and at about nine o'clock we approached the city hall of Sommepey. In and around Sommepey a battle had started. We were ordered to take a part of the north-west section of the city. It was already dark and once more we halted. The fields all around us were covered with dead. In the middle of the streets were French batteries and munition columns. Horses and drivers had been killed.

After a ten-minute rest we started again and in double-quick step approached a little forest, in which dismounted cavalry and infantry were engaged with the enemy in a desperate hand-to-hand fight.

As a subterfuge we threw ourselves into the place with blood-curdling yells. We succeeded in the darkness in reaching the enemies' rear. The surprise attack was a success and the French, startled by our yells and by the attack, threw up their hands and surrendered. Mercy was not shown them by the infuriated cavalrymen.

Whenever there appeared to be any letup of the slaughter of the disarmed soldiers by our men new horrors were

enacted under the commands of the officers, who kept shouting, "No quarter, slaughter everybody." Such were the orders of our distinguished officers. We pioneers also had to take part in this cold-blooded murder of unarmed men, who had thrown down their arms when they realized the futility of further resistance. Our officers took care this time, as in many earlier and later instances, that there should not be many prisoners taken.

The pioneer has a sidearm which, according to the law of nations, must not be used because the back of this sidearm consists of a three-millimeter sharp steel saw. In peace times the pioneers are not drilled with the bayonet because this sidearm should be used only for the special duties which the pioneers perform—but the law of nations is not the law of Prussian militarism.

We were obliged to use the saw from the beginning of the war. It was in opposition to all the laws of humanity. When an enemy had this saw in his breast and the victim had long since stopped every effort of resistance and an effort was made to try and remove the deadly steel from the wound an instant and horrible death resulted.

Oftentimes this horrible weapon became embedded in the breast of a victim so firmly that the attacker, who had to have back his sidearm again would be obliged to place his foot upon the breast of his victim and use all his force to recover the murderous instrument.

The dead and wounded in horrible condition lay all around us. The moans of the wounded men would have softened a stone but not the heart of a Prussian soldier.

Not all the soldiers approved this senseless, wanton murder. Some of those officers who had ordered us to kill the French were themselves killed by mistake in the darkness of the night by their own men. Such mistakes are still being repeated almost daily and I could cite many names and places to bear out this testimony.

On this particular night a captain and a first lieutenant met their fate. A second-year infantryman stabbed the captain in the abdomen and the first lieutenant received a stab in the back. Both died in a few minutes. Neither of their slayers felt any remorse and none of us felt inclined to reproach them. We all knew that two murderers had received their just deserts.

Another instance requires me to run somewhat ahead of the sequence of events. As I talked to a comrade of my company the next day I asked him for a pocketknife and in reaching into his pocket he pulled out three cartridges. I was surprised that he should carry cartridges in his trouser's pocket and asked him if he had no room in his belt.

"I have," he said, "but these three have a special mission. There are names of the intended victims on these bullets."

Some time later after we had be-

PERILS OF THE PANTOMIME

Chances Once Taken by Clowns, Harlequins and Pantaloons—Clockwork Precision Was Necessity.

In speaking of his connection with the Fox American pantomimes, the late F. W. Hofele, once manager of the Old Bowery theater, told me that the making of these many mechanical tricks consumed much time. "T. W. W." writes in the New York Sun. Many skilled workmen were employed, as these devices had to work perfectly and not get stuck when in use. The duties of the stage manager were arduous indeed. From the time the stage manager tinkled his little bell for the rise of the curtain to his signal to ring down the act drop he was as busy a man as could be found anywhere in any capacity on earth.

Everything had to be done when the order was given to do it or everything would be instantly thrown out of trim, with the result of a confusion gone mad. Serious accidents are likely to happen to performers if the greatest care is not exercised. Take the work of Harlequin, that merry fellow with the magic sword, who is always dancing and gliding about with his lovely Columbine. What a hazardous part he plays. He is perpetually taking a leap in the dark, trusting to sheer luck as to whether he will do that leap safely or not. I saw Paul Martinetti come up through the star trap in the usual way on one occasion, but instead of leaving the trap in its place he took it up with him. The points of the star were sticking in his neck and the square framework was rest-

come good friends I asked him again about the three cartridges. He had only one left. I thought about it a great deal and in my mind went over the noncommissioned officers, who, before war was declared had treated us like animals and whom we had hated as only human fiends can be hated. Two of these had found their grave in France.

The murder of Frenchmen who had surrendered continued as long as an enemy was alive. Then we received orders to determine if the enemies lying on the ground were all dead and unable to fight. If anyone was found simulating death it was ordered that he be killed. But the soldiers had lost some of the fever which had seized them during the battle and refused to obey this order. How they felt about it was illustrated by the remark of a member of my company:

"We had better look once more and see if the two officers are really dead and if not they ought to be killed without mercy for a command is a command."

We now advanced quickly but our part in the battle was over as the entire French line had retired to make a fresh stand, two kilometers west of Sommepey. The city was mostly in flames. The enemy artillery bombarded the town without intermission and shells burst all around.

Several hundred prisoners were corralled in the market place. Several French shells struck the prisoners but they were obliged to remain where they were. An officer of my company, Lieut. A. R. Neesen, remarked that no harm was done as the prisoners knew at least how their own ammunition tasted.

Civilian dead strewn streets of French towns as the invaders sweep on toward Paris. The author describes these scenes as well as the plundering of homes and stores in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PLEA FOR "FOOLLESS" DAY

Movement to Abolish Stupid April Fools Jokes Surely Would Meet With General Approval.

In connection with the movement for "less" days it is up to some patriot who has the highest interest of the nation at heart to launch a campaign for a foolless first of April.

Individuals, like automobiles, are not foolproof, and Mr. Absent Minded, who from time immemorial has been a much-foolled man on the fatal day, would rise up and call congress blessed, instead of calling the members thereof names, as he now does, if that body would busy itself with legislation abolishing the April-fool jokes that wreck tempers, ruin dispositions and work havoc generally.

On the other hand, Mrs. Absent Minded would probably fight to the last ditch against any curtailment of the privileges of jeering derisively at her husband when he puts salt in his coffee, cracks an egg which proves to be only a shell, finds the lining of his overcoat sewed up, picks up some stage money on the doorstep and starts to work with a box of soap camouflaged as candy in his pocket to munch after lunch.

As a result the sons of dignity will probably have to endure the annual disturbance of their mental equilibrium in order to keep peace in the family.

ing on his shoulders. When he landed on the floor he staggered a few steps, then righted himself and ran off the stage. As he continued his part he could not have been injured greatly. I think he was lucky not to have broken his collar-bone.

Rifling the Pilgrims.

In times of peace devout Moslems arrived in Palestine from all parts of the world to perform the Haj—pilgrimage—make their supplications to Allah in the Holy Sanctuaries of Mecca, kiss the Kaaba, and take part in other religious ceremonies. On arriving at the principal port, Jeddah, they were met post haste by hosts of purse-cutters, guides—practiced scoundrels—and others, all keen on lightening the pockets of the pilgrims under all manner of pretenses. The Turkish government used to keep all the pilgrims in Mecca for a fortnight at least after the Haj, so that they might spend all their money there and go back penniless to their countries.

Grocer Had Nothing to Say.

The grocer thought one day that he would like a steak for his dinner as a change from the bacon, so he sent his little girl across to the butcher for one pound of steak.

On receiving the steak, he thought he might satisfy his curiosity by weighing it, and in so doing he found it to be four ounces light of weight. He brought it across to the butcher and said: "What is the meaning of only giving me twelve ounces of meat instead of one pound?"

The butcher calmly replied: "I lost my one-pound weight, so I had to use your one-pound packet of tea."

THE JOY OF MOTHERHOOD

Came to this Woman after Taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to Restore Her Health

Ellensburg, Wash.—"After I was married I was not well for a long time and a good deal of the time was not able to go about. Our greatest desire was to have a child in our home and one day my husband came back from town with a bottle of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and wanted me to try it. It brought relief from my troubles.



I improved in health so I could do my housework; we now have a little one, all of which I owe to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."—Mrs. O. S. JOHNSON, R. No. 3, Ellensburg, Wash.

There are women everywhere who long for children in their homes yet are denied this happiness on account of some functional disorder which in most cases would readily yield to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Such women should not give up hope until they have given this wonderful medicine a trial, and for special advice write Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass. The result of 40 years experience is at your service.

Clear Your Skin While You Sleep with Cuticura

All druggists; Soap 25, Ointment 50¢ & 75¢, Tubes 25¢. 5¢ sample each free of "Cuticura, Dept. E, Boston."

PATENTS Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, Washington, D. C. Advice and books free. Rates reasonable. Highest references. Best service.

IN BAD WAY PHYSICALLY

Physician's Verdict Made Recruit Wonder if Any Disease Had Got Away From Him.

The curiosity of Henry James who applied for enlistment in the United States Marine corps at Los Angeles remains unsatisfied.

James was taken before Dr. G. J. Hildebrand, the examining physician, and, after the usual physical examination, was told that he failed to meet the requirements.

"What's the matter with me?" queried the prospective Hun destroyer.

"You've got scoliosis, phthisis and synovitis," was the surgeon's reply.

The would-be marine blushed to be told so frankly what prevented his becoming a devil dog, and turned to go out, when the doctor shot a few hot parting words after him.

"Not only that—you're troubled with slight astigmatism, otitis media and chronic furunculosis."

"Gosh," was all the lad could say as he fled in confusion.

Equal Value.

"What did the bride's rich relations give her?"

"One gave her a silver, gold-lined sugar bowl and the other gave her enough sugar to fill it."

Sometimes.

"Speech is an engine of action."

"Often it is a hot-air engine."—Baltimore American.

British war history is now compiled up to September, 1914.



The Wear and Tear on that boy of yours during the active years of childhood and youth necessitates a real building food.

Grape-Nuts

supplies the essentials for vigorous minds and bodies at any age.

"There's a Reason"